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ABSTRACT

Students at Indiana University preparing to become elementary teachers were offered the option of participating in a Block Program as an alternative to the customary Early Childhood Program. Block is a professional semester for students at the end of their junior or beginning of their senior year. The characteristics of this program are: (1) team approach to instruction; (2) flexibility; (3) carefully articulated work with respect to preparation in language arts, mathematics, reading, science, and social studies; (4) carefully articulated collegiate and field experiences in the schools; and (5) extensive evaluation of each phase of the program including followup studies. This followup study of 1980 graduates sought information on their employment status. Results of the questionnaire sent to graduates revealed that ninety percent of those seeking jobs found full-time teaching positions or related positions. (JD)

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1980 GRADUATES OF THE BLOCK PROJECT

A FOLLOW-UP STUDY

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INTRODUCTION

At the time of their matriculation, the Block Program was one of several major options available to students preparing to become elementary teachers. One of these offerings was, in fact, a complete professional program; that is, all professional components (courses, modules, experiences) were accounted for in the program itself. Each of the program elements was presumably well-articulated with the others and mutually reinforcing. This program was The Early Childhood Program. Block is not a program in this complete sense and should be more appropriately identified as a project since only sixteen to seventeen hours of professional preparation were included.

The Block Project. Block is a professional semester for students in their second semester of the Junior Year or first semester of the Senior Year. The following characteristics are associated with this option: (1) team approach to instruction; (2) flexibility of program; (3) carefully articulated work with respect to preparation in Language Arts, Mathematics, Reading, Science, and Social Studies; (4) carefully articulated collegiate and field experiences in the schools (one-half day or one full day per week); and (5) extensive evaluation of each phase of the program including Follow-Up studies. As a rule, students must sign up for all 16-17 hours which then ensures maximum flexibility in program planning. It is possible, however, for portions of the program to be waived as is true for those students who took math methods during their Sophomore Year (special project). On occasion, students are permitted to participate in the program over two semesters of

a summer and a semester because of unusual personal circumstances. About ninety percent of the students will take the full complement of hours in one semester.

Following the Block Semester, students have several different Student Teaching Options which they may exercise. Such choices are open to students in the Block and the Campus-Based Programs. (See Diagram 1)

Rationale. When students have choices, they often raise questions about various "programs". Answers to most of these questions have been readily available: Who teaches in the program? When and how are courses scheduled? How does one gain admission? What kinds of field experiences are provided? How will students be evaluated? Are there specific requirements? What are the unique characteristics of this program? Etc. Prior to 1976, however, we were not able to answer THE QUESTION: What happens to those participants who complete your program and graduate--Do they get jobs? One purpose of this study then was to continue studies begun several years ago and, thus, be able to provide up-to-date information relative to this question.

Part I Procedures

A questionnaire was designed and then distributed to faculty associated with the Block Project. This group consisted of senior faculty, associate instructors, and graduate assistants. These people met weekly for purposes of planning, implementation, and evaluation. Their reactions provided the major input for questionnaire modification.

DIAGRAM 1

Options For Elementary Majors

Generalist Preparation

Campus-Based Block Program

(Programs of Preparation for the generalist--K-6 teachers/no particular reference to age, grade level, or background of students to be taught)

Choice of Student Teaching

- Non-Project
- Project
  - American Indian
  - Latino
  - Urban Semester
  - Etc.

Specialized Preparation

Early Childhood Education

(Program of Preparation for Teachers of Young Children Ages 3-8)

Student Teaching Experience

All predetermined as a result of admission to program

Questionnaires were sent out initially in early November, 1980. Enclosed with each questionnaire was a self-addressed/postage paid envelope. Before the first questionnaires were sent out, however, a check was made with our records department (School of Education), as well as other sources (Placement Bureau, Alumni Office), in an attempt to verify permanent address data as well as information on graduation. Students in the Block Project in the spring and fall of 1979 were expected to graduate in January, May or August of 1980.

In early December, a second questionnaire was sent out to all non-respondents. On December 31, 1980, we closed this phase of our search.

Telephone contact was then made in January, 1981 with non-respondents who had not been accounted for using the above procedures. Often, communication was with a parent rather than the student directly. This activity then represented our final attempt to identify the whereabouts of our former students.

Part II The Findings

Our primary concern relates to those students who were actually seeking teaching positions. Of course, not all were ready to move into the market place. Some simply did not graduate on the normal four-year student calendar assumed. And others, who did complete their degrees and thus qualify for a teaching certificate, did not choose to move directly into their chosen profession upon graduation. These were few in number. Most students not in the job market simply had not graduated as of September,

1980. Table I provides an overview of what happened to the 1979 participants in the Block Project.

Table I

1979 PARTICIPANTS IN THE BLOCK PROJECT*

	Number	Percentage
1979 Block Participants	101	100
1980 Graduates	88	37
Did not Graduate by September 1, 1980	13	13
Graduated/Qualified for Teaching	88	100
Available for Placement (Looking)	80	91
Not Available (Not Looking)	3	3
Unable to Locate	5	6
Available for Placement	80	100
Found/Offered Teaching Positions	61	76
Found Related Positions	11	14
Did Not Find Teaching/Related Positions	8	10
Not Available for Placement	3	100
Other Employment Interests/Opportunities	2	67
Graduate School	1	33

*This model for reporting manpower data is the same one used by the Federal Government. See Summary Data: Vocation Education. Fiscal Year 1974 published by U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare/Office of Education/Bureau of Occupational and Adult Education/Office of Adult, Vocation, Technical, and Manpower Education/Division of Vocational and Technical Education.

These students were in The Block Project at one of two times: (1) Spring Semester 1978-79; or (2) Fall Semester 1979-80. Assuming a normal matriculation pattern, one would have expected all students to graduate in 1980 (January, May, or August). Many students obviously do not follow this pattern. The thirteen noted above either graduated in January 1981 or were

scheduled to do so in the summer of 1981. Either way, they were not in the Job Market for the Fall of 1980.

Those Seeking Teaching Positions. Table II describes what happened to the 80 students who were seeking full-time teaching positions. Of this number, 76 percent were successful and fourteen percent more were able to find related positions--these are positions which require a degree, one where preparation as an elementary major was critical to employment. In most instances (9), these persons were serving as substitute teachers, several on permanent contracts. The two persons not engaged in Substitute Teaching were involved in curriculum development work, one for a major educational publisher and the other for a major university. All told, 90 percent, of those seeking jobs, found full-time teaching positions or related positions. Of the eight students who were not successful in finding teaching positions or employment in related fields, three were unemployed. In every instance, these young women had just recently been married and had very limited job parameters. They were just beginning to seek other types of work. The other students were all employed--one in campus ministry work, another as a clerk in an insurance company, and the third in business management (two were departmental managers and one was in a bank management trainee program).

Table II

STUDENTS LOOKING FOR POSITION

	Number	Percentage
Total Number Looking for Positions	80	100
Found Teaching Positions	61	76
Found Related Positions	11	14
Found Other Jobs	5	6
Unemployed	3	4

Part III Conclusions

Participants in the Block Project, who move on to complete their degree requirements and then move actively into the job market seeking full-time positions, are successful in achieving this objective. Of those seeking full-time teaching positions, 76 percent found them. When considering teaching and other related positions, the figure rises to 90 percent.

Most of our students continue to assume positions in public schools. While most locate in Indiana, many locate out-of-state from New Jersey to Florida/Georgia to Arizona and Texas.

The information obtained in this study has been most encouraging and will undoubtedly continue to affect the behavior of both students and faculty in many ways. One can predict with considerable confidence that students at lower levels will very much want to get into the Block Project as results of this study are publicized. Students presently in the program are certainly encouraged--they probably will continue to put forth good efforts, both this semester and during Student Teaching. These observations have been very, very evident ever since we began these annual studies.

Faculty cannot help but be affected by these results. Certainly we will continue to put forth a maximum effort to provide a strong program in instruction. Participation in a field-based program, even a modified one such as Block, requires a tremendous amount of time and energy. Successful pay off is again confirmed. We all need such positive feedback.